

INDUSTRIAL WORKER

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Wobblies Defend Fired Bus Driver In London

By IWW Southeast

Wobblies express in the strongest terms our condemnation of the unfair dismissal of Fellow Worker Oscar Alvarez, union representative of the IWW at the Metroline bus company at the West Perivale Bus Garage in London. Despite the fact that the company was at fault, and despite a global solidarity campaign led by the London IWW, company appeals procedures have defended the original decision and are now exhausted. The London IWW is currently taking legal advice on next steps.

Oscar has been a London bus driver for eight and a half years. He reached the 10th position nationwide in the Blackpool Best Bus Driver of the Year 2007 competition, which to date is still unbeaten by any Metroline driver. He was sacked following a minor disagreement with a car driver on the road who had cut up his bus, endangering herself, her baby and his passengers.

Oscar's sacking is far from being an isolated occurrence. This is part of an escalating wave of sackings on the buses over the last few years, along with London bus companies imposing terrible contracts on new starters, creating a two-tier workforce (an often-used method of gradually undermining contract terms & conditions). Union agreements are being ignored, yet unions do not appear to be offering any serious attempt to fight this "race to the bottom."

Beginning in December 2012, contracts for all new bus drivers began to be rolled out, first at the Brentford Bus Garage and then at the West Perivale Garage in February. Whereas the Brentford contracts were all accepted, in West Perivale there was a furious rejection by the drivers—many IWW members—the majority of whom refused to sign. Oscar Alvarez was one of those drivers, and an IWW union rep, who bravely opposed these blatant

attacks to the drivers' terms and conditions. He was sacked shortly after, despite the fact that he had no previous complaints from management.

During the disciplinary proceedings that resulted in his dismissal, there were a number of breaches in procedure that rendered the process unfair. We believe the sanction of dismissing Oscar was disproportionate and displayed clear inconsistency. We

are certain that, far from constituting gross misconduct, Oscar's behavior ought to be

**SUPPORT YOUR BUS
DRIVERS!**
END METROLINE RACE TO THE BOTTOM:
REINSTATE OSCAR ALVAREZ NOW!



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STAND TOGETHER



London Wobblies fight for Oscar.

Graphic: London IWW

construed as an attempt to correct the

Continued on 7

Wobblies Organize & Win In North Carolina

By the Greensboro IWW

The Greensboro IWW achieved a swift and valuable win that illustrated the power of solidarity and direct action in May. A branch member had been unjustly fired from his job at New York Pizza on Tate Street. This fellow worker was owed more than \$1,100, including unpaid overtime and off-the-clock work, as well as money that had been improperly deducted from his pay for rejected food and register shortages.

On Monday, May 6, this fellow worker, accompanied by another branch member, delivered a letter to the boss from the Greensboro IWW, demanding payment in full by that Friday. The branch was prepared to leaflet and picket at the location if our fellow worker did not receive his wages in full.

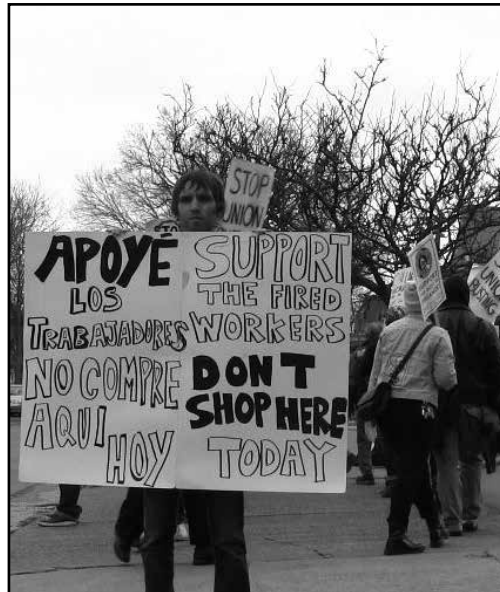
When this fellow worker returned on Friday, a contrite boss handed him a check for the full amount. This didn't happen because the boss was a nice guy. It happened because the boss recognized that this particular worker was not alone and



Graphic: greensboroiww.org

not afraid, that his fellow workers were at his side.

This is solidarity unionism in action. It's not a bureaucrat coming to the rescue of a helpless individual, just fellow workers, standing together, declaring that "an injury to one is an injury to all," and demonstrating our collective strength through direct action.



IWW picket on May 4. Photo: Nick Shillingford

By John O'Reilly

Just a month after the retaliatory firings of five workers shocked South Minneapolis (see "IWW Liquor Store Workers Fired For Union Activity," May 2013 IW, page 1), a noted progressive community within the Twin Cities, workers at Chicago-Lake Liquors (Chi-Lake) continue their fight for justice at work by taking it right to their bosses. Throughout April, workers and their supporters in the IWW have kept the story of the fired workers alive in South Minneapolis, holding two large informational pickets outside the store and flyer to customers every weekend night. While management refuses to speak with the fired workers, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) continues to investigate the firings and the IWW continues to heighten the pressure against the company.

On April 1, as readers of the *Industrial Worker* will remember, five IWW organizers at the highest-volume liquor retailer in Minnesota were fired after the majority of their coworkers delivered a petition to management asking for a higher wages and to raise the wage cap for the store, which sits at \$10.50 per hour, below Minneapolis' living wage of \$12.19. The five IWW members, whose union affiliation was not known by management at the

time, were fired in an attempt to scare the rest of their coworkers into silence. So far the attempt has backfired, as IWW supporters' continued presence outside the store has only solidified the idea that the union has Chi-Lake workers' backs and is not going away. The fired IWW workers continue to demand an end to union-busting at Chi-Lake, their immediate rehiring, and a raise for all workers there.

The union decided to up the militancy of the struggle on Saturday, May 4, when nearly 50 working-class Minnesotans and IWW members picketed outside the two main entrances to Chi-Lake, stopping cars at the driveways and asking them to turn around and shop elsewhere that day. Minnesota's blue laws prohibit liquor sales on Sundays, so Saturday is the biggest day for liquor retailers. Additionally, May 4 came a day before the Southside's annual May Day parade and Cinco de Mayo, both big days for drinking. IWW members turned away upwards of 90 percent of shoppers while they picketed, making what should have been an extremely busy Saturday into a quiet afternoon inside the store and testifying to the consciousness of the Minneapolis working class. Cars honked in support and union supporters cheered as customer after customer pulled a U-turn and drove away to buy their booze elsewhere. Despite management's threats and security personnel's attempt to arrest IWW members, union workers stayed strong and held the line for the duration of the picket, asserting their rights and their power. The picket was scary enough for John Wolf, Chi-Lake's owner, who has become basically invisible since the fight began, to emerge and skulk around the store.

While the fight for fair wages and union rights at Chi-Lake is just beginning, IWW members vow that it's a fight they'll see to the finish. Escalation work continues on multiple levels and *Industrial Worker* readers should stay tuned for what comes next. As the chant which has become a favorite on Chi-Lake picket lines goes: "If we don't get no justice, you don't get no Natty Ice!"

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What’s Needed For Effective Industrial Unionism

(Note: This isa response to “Staughton Lynd Responds To Counterpoint On ‘Planks,’” which appeared on page 2 of the April 2013 IW).

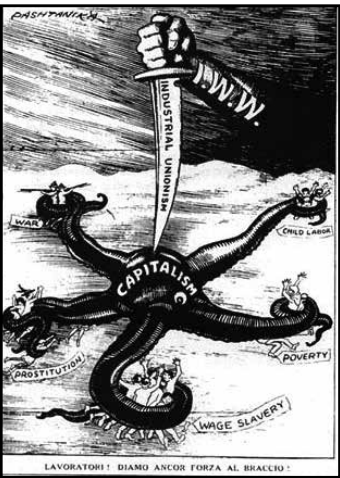
I do not misunderstand Staughton Lynd, I just have a different point of view. If our Preamble only spoke of industrial unionism I could understand his point of view, but it includes much more. Yes, the United Mine Workers (UMW), as is most all industrial unions in the AFL-CIO, is a far too top-down organization. That is not the fault of industrial unionism, but rather the fault of top-down unionism, of which the trade unions are mostly the same.

Still, even there I would say having industrial unions is far better than trade unions. I know this firsthand because since 1972, for the most part, I have belonged to other unions besides the IWW. Most of them were trade unions. In construction trade unions, they have been forced to create a bit of a hybrid form of industrial unionism between the Building Trades and Metal Trades Councils. But even with that, the trade union side of thinking sometimes wins out. I experienced that two times. Once during a Metal Trades strike that lasted eight-and-a-half months, when one

of the unions signed their own contract and crossed the picket line of the other unions. Another time one union, the Boilermakers, signed a contract that left the other workers locked out for over a year.

Think about how things would have been if mining, auto, steel and so on organized by trade rather than by industry. You think things are bad now, it would be far worse if that had not happened. My point is that industrial unionism needs to be our union structure, but it does not stop there. There are many other things that are needed for good revolutionary unionism.

It is true, in my view, that “conventional labor unions would not seek radical structural change.” That is why we workers need the IWW and its unconventional revolutionary industrial unionism. As a long time dual carder it has been my view for over 40 years that the AFL-CIO cannot be reformed.



Graphic: depts.washington.edu

themselves out of a job. In other words, their job is to organize the workers so that they, the workers of a shop, can take over all the union work of their shop and branch when they are able to. The idea that workers should only organize themselves and once they do that we are willing to accompany them will not work often in the real world and would put off the workers taking control of their labor forever.

Arthur J. Miller,
just an old retired shipyard worker



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Interview

Blair Pathways Project Promotes Radical Workers’ History

By the St. Louis IWW

Saro Lynch-Thomason recently embarked on a 12-city U.S. tour, giving a one-hour slide show presentation which combines spoken-word narrative, Appalachian labor songs, and projected still images to create a brief but powerful history of early 20th century mine workers’ unions, as well as the famous gun battle between miners and company thugs and strikebreakers known as the “Battle of Blair Mountain.” This interview was conducted in April 2013.

St. Louis IWW (StL): Is this the first time you’ve taken Blair Pathways on the road? How did the project come about?

Saro Lynch-Thomason (SLT): This is the first time I have done a tour with the Mine Wars presentation, which I developed during the winter of 2012-2013. The Mine Wars presentation developed out of everything I had learned while working on the Blair Pathways CD. For the past few years as I developed the CD, I learned a good deal about people’s personal experiences during the wars and the music they used in their day-to-day lives in the coal and strike camps. During this process I was also exposed to the work of Charlie King and Karen Brandow, a dynamic couple who have developed a series of multimedia shows on people’s history. After the Blair Pathways CD was finished, I decided I wanted to develop a similarly styled show about the Mine Wars.

StL: When you were collecting the music for Blair Pathways, you collaborated with several Americana and folk musicians. How did this collaborative networking affect the overall project?

SLT: It was very fruitful. The musicians were very interested in getting advice and direction on how to approach the songs, but were ultimately comfortable giving their songs a unique, personal sound. In some cases I would give musicians a few choices of pieces to choose

from, and then they would pick the piece that felt most comfortable or intuitive to them, so I think that also helped give the musicians a sense of personal responsibility and intimacy with the works. The project ultimately came out with diverse, well-executed works, the quality of which really spoke to how much the musicians cared about this cause.

StL: Blair Pathways does an excellent job of articulating how the fight for workers’ rights in the coal country of Appalachia was rooted in violent class warfare. It’s incredible how many workers today don’t realize that labor unions were deemed illegal in the years leading up to World War II. Do you think the Battle of Blair Mountain was a tipping point in the U.S. labor movement, in the sense that it forced the powers that be to acknowledge the legitimacy of organized labor?

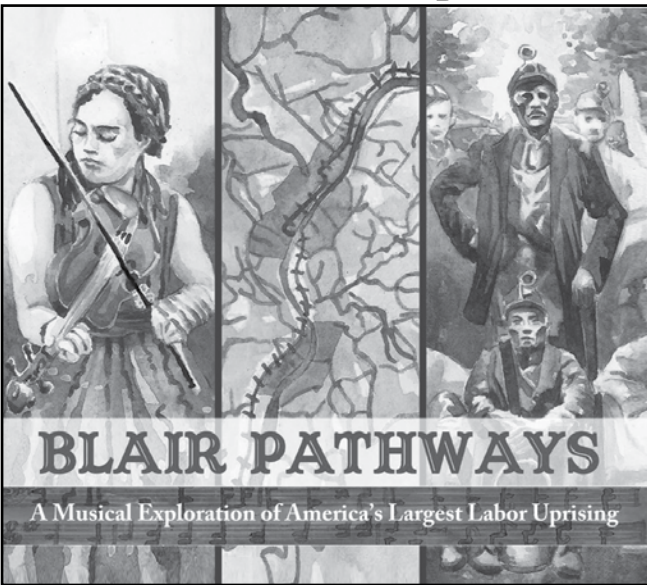
SLT: I feel that the uprising at Blair exhibited the collective power of laboring communities in such a way that government agencies and coal companies felt extremely threatened. The nineteen-teens were full of powerful movements, including the successful “Bread and Roses” strike of Lawrence, Mass., in 1912, and I think the national leadership was putting together the pattern that these kinds of actions would keep happening until the workers won at least some concessions. This fear, at least, in turn produced some real basic rights for unions in time. It took about another 15 years, but labor rights were finally acknowledged through bills like the Wagner Act. This is a very complicated story, but those are a few basic thoughts on the topic.

StL: One thing your presentation touches upon is the fact that mine workers were exempt from the military draft during World War I. It’s interesting how dependent the U.S. war effort was on domestic natural resources. For instance, IWW timber workers in the Pacific Northwest

tied up production through strikes and slowdowns to such an extent that soldiers were brought in as scab labor. What was the climate in the coal mining communities during World War I?

SLT: From what little I know, the war years were a good time for miners in the fields. In West Virginia at least, there was a good deal of patriotism and a lot of fundraising efforts, etc., to help the war effort. The UMWA [United Mine Workers of America] even made a deal with the national government not to call any national strikes until the end of the war. But looking at the boom-and-bust cycles of the war economy in the early 20th century, one can always see the conditions in post-war years going back to the low standards that were present before. So often, even if the mining community enjoyed prosperity during the war, it would always realize the need to organize again when the economy slowed down, and we can see that dynamic play out at the end of World War I, which helped to fuel the Mine Wars of 1919-1921.

StL: U.S. trade unions are in critical condition. After the Blair Pathways presentation in St. Louis, you mentioned that the UMWA leadership recently neglected to endorse the March on Blair Mountain [a coalition of environmentalists, historical preservationists, IWW members, and civic groups opposed to mountain removal in West Virginia]. How do you explain the reluctance, or outright refusal, of UMWA officials to ally themselves with an effort many of their own rank-and-file members wholeheartedly support? Do you think the lack of militancy in the mainstream labor movement is partially to blame for the current decline in union membership?



Cover of Blair Pathways CD. Graphic: blairpathways.com

SLT: My understanding is that the UMWA is trying to focus a good deal on providing what jobs it can for its miners, even as many mines are shutting down in the Appalachian coalfields. It appears to me that the trade-off for this aim is to ameliorate the companies to keep jobs, while not taking a strong stance on what comes next for workers in the coalfields. Coal will not be around forever, but those workers and their families will still need jobs. I think the next, necessary step for unions like the UMWA is to face the reality that their industry is about to radically change, and not ask for scraps from the companies in the process, but instead to find what the new work can be for families in the region.

StL: How can people find out more about the Blair Pathways CD?

SLT: You can learn more about the Blair Pathways CD by going to <http://www.blairpathways.com>. The website also has an interactive map, historical essays, and song archives from the 2011 March to Save Blair Mountain. The CD can be ordered from the website if so desired!

IWW Constitution Preamble

The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things of life. Between these two classes a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organize as a class, take possession of the means of production, abolish the wage system, and live in harmony with the earth.

We find that the centering of the management of industries into fewer and fewer hands makes the trade unions unable to cope with the ever-growing power of the employing class. The trade unions foster a state of affairs which allows one set of workers to be pitted against another set of workers in the same industry, thereby helping defeat one another in wage wars. Moreover, the trade unions aid the employing class to mislead the workers into the belief that the working class have interests in common with their employers.

These conditions can be changed and the interest of the working class upheld only by an organization formed in such a way that all its members in any one industry, or all industries if necessary, cease work whenever a strike or lockout is on in any department thereof, thus making an injury to one an injury to all.

Instead of the conservative motto, “A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work,” we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, “Abolition of the wage system.”

It is the historic mission of the working class to do away with capitalism. The army of production must be organized, not only for the everyday struggle with capitalists, but also to carry on production when capitalism shall have been overthrown. By organizing industrially we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old.

Join the IWW Today

The IWW is a union for all workers, a union dedicated to organizing on the job, in our industries and in our communities both to win better conditions today and to build a world without bosses, a world in which production and distribution are organized by workers ourselves to meet the needs of the entire population, not merely a handful of exploiters.

We are the Industrial Workers of the World because we organize industrially – that is to say, we organize all workers on the job into one union, rather than dividing workers by trade, so that we can pool our strength to fight the bosses together.

Since the IWW was founded in 1905, we have recognized the need to build a truly international union movement in order to confront the global power of the bosses and in order to strengthen workers’ ability to stand in solidarity with our fellow workers no matter what part of the globe they happen to live on.

We are a union open to all workers, whether or not the IWW happens to have representation rights in your workplace. We organize the worker, not the job, recognizing that unionism is not about government certification or employer recognition but about workers coming together to address our common concerns. Sometimes this means striking or signing a contract. Sometimes it means refusing to work with an unsafe machine or following the bosses’ orders so literally that nothing gets done. Sometimes it means agitating around particular issues or grievances in a specific workplace, or across an industry.

Because the IWW is a democratic, member-run union, decisions about what issues to address and what tactics to pursue are made by the workers directly involved.

TO JOIN: Mail this form with a check or money order for initiation and your first month’s dues to: IWW, Post Office Box 180195, Chicago, IL 60618, USA.

Initiation is the same as one month’s dues. Our dues are calculated according to your income. If your monthly income is under \$2000, dues are \$9 a month. If your monthly income is between \$2000 and \$3500, dues are \$18 a month. If your monthly income is over \$3500 a month, dues are \$27 a month. Dues may vary outside of North America and in Regional Organizing Committees (Australia, British Isles, German Language Area).

- ☐ I affirm that I am a worker, and that I am not an employer.
- ☐ I agree to abide by the IWW constitution.
- ☐ I will study its principles and acquaint myself with its purposes.



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Venture Syndicalism: Can Reviving The Strike Revive Mass Unionization?

By Nate Hawthorne

It's surprising how small a fraction of U.S. workers are actually in labor unions. Just over 7 million government employees are union members and slightly fewer private sector employees are in unions. This means that just under 12 percent of public sector workers and less than 7 percent of private sector workers are in unions. These numbers keep falling.

If unions want to reverse their decline, they need to return to powerful strikes that stop businesses completely. That's what Joe Burns argues in his recent book, "Reviving the Strike." It's a good book and I recommend it highly to all IWW members (it would pair very well with "Labor Law for the Rank and Filer" by Staughton Lynd and Daniel Gross). Burns supplies a concise and clear argument about the role of labor law in the decline of unions. The labor law system doesn't work for unions, so if the unions want to continue to exist, they need to start breaking the law, he argues. There are big risks to breaking the law, though. Burns suggests that unions can get around this by setting up and funding fully independent organizations that will have fewer resources, and less to lose as a result. We may be seeing versions of this already, with the strikes against Walmart warehouse subcontractors, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) organizing against Walmart and fast food respectively and union support for workers' centers.

We might call this "venture syndicalism," named after venture capitalism. Venture capital firms are companies that advance money to businesses that are in their very early stages, when they have little money, lots of risk of failure yet a high potential for success. The funds spent are a great deal of money for the startup company but only a small amount of money for a large financial company. Venture syndicalism is the union version of this, where the mainstream and wealthier unions fund more confrontational efforts than they can afford to carry out on their own.

Radicals have an important role to play in this effort. Both venture capitalism and venture syndicalism rely on a lot of initial unpaid hours by volunteers excited about the project for reasons beyond short-term financial gain. Burns suggests that most people join unions if and when it's in their economic interest to do so. Unions in the United States are not going to have the power to win much unless there's a threat of really serious economic harm to employers. That means unions are unlikely to act in ways that make the benefits of forming a union outweigh the costs for most people.

If people join unions based on cost-benefit analysis then there's little reason why anyone would ever take such actions. There's a sort of "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" quality to all this; most people won't join unions unless there's some benefit to doing so, yet the law

is set up so that unions behave in ways that limit the benefits of unionization. Breaking the law will have huge costs, so why would people break the law?

The solution to the puzzle is that some people need to take militant action despite the risks, and not primarily out of a narrow cost-benefit analysis. I think this is part of the role that radicals can play in helping set off movements to enliven the existing labor movement. Some people might run the risks of initial militancy despite the consequences. In doing so, they push against the current prevailing forms of governing capitalism. If these initial efforts succeed, larger numbers can join in and the rules of the game will change, encouraging larger numbers of workers to form unions. That is to say it is often not in workers' short-term interests, narrowly understood, to form unions. People who act bravely against short-term interests might change this condition, to make it so that unionization becomes more in keeping with people's short-term narrow interests. This is basically what happened in the 1930s. It may be happening again, or may be coming in the near future.

If all of this is happening or begins to happen soon, we should welcome it but also ask: yes, revive the strike, but for what purpose? To put it another way, let's say the unions "revive the strike," as Burns has called for. Then what? What Burns argues is that this could lead to greater unionization. Is that what we want? Should we measure success by rising rates of unionization, and in dollars and cents won on the shop floor?

We're a revolutionary union. In my view, we should have an organization-wide conversation about different ways to organize a post-revolutionary society, what we think a revolution would look like in the countries where we operate and what activities might move a revolution closer. I'm not convinced that a militant labor struggle alone moves the working class toward a new society. What I've been calling venture syndicalism might be an effort by the labor movement to revive the strike in order use it to advocate for a new and "better" capitalism. We shouldn't think that the militancy of a strike alone is a measure of how much it brings us closer to a new society.

More to the point, if we see the AFL-CIO and Change to Win labor groups begin to aggressively break the rules of labor law, we should welcome this, but will it change our understanding of those unions? If this happens we may be asked to stand with their struggles, and we should do so. But we should do so in ways that put us in contact with the members of those organizations, not primarily their staff and officers, and that will create conversations about what a good society would look like, not simply to address the issues of winning the short-term struggle. Otherwise we'll be little more than unpaid volunteers in the venture syndicalist project of creating a slightly better capitalism.

Workers Power Is On Vacation



Workers Power is on vacation and will return next month. In the meantime, you can send your submissions to forworkerspower@gmail.com.



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WOMEN WORKERS' HISTORY

Chapter 64

Red Scare

Early on the morning of Dec. 21, 1919, Emma Goldman was placed aboard the S.S. Buford, a creaky old army transport ship bound for Russia. Since her immigration to the U.S. in 1885, she had been among the nation's most controversial women. Radicalized by the 1886 Haymarket tragedy, she had been a courageous champion of workers' freedom, active in defense of the Homestead and Pullman strikers, in the San Diego free speech fight and in other labor struggles. Now, because of her unpopular ideas, she was being deported. Two hundred and forty-eight other immigrant radicals were on board with her. Others would follow her.

"On the night of Jan. 2, 1920, 10,000 American workers, both aliens and citizens, most of them trade union members and many of them union officials, were hauled from their beds, dragged out of meetings, grabbed from the streets and from their homes, and thrown into prison by the federal police under the direction of Attorney General Palmer and his aide, J. Edgar Hoover."* The raids took place simultaneously in 70 cities.



Company spies aided Hoover's men by pointing out the active trade unionists to be picked up. Many of those seized had been active in strikes and in union affairs.

The *New York Times* proclaimed on Jan. 2, "200 Reds Taken in Chicago. Wholesale Plot Hatched to Overthrow U.S. Government." The only real plot was the one hatched by big business to weaken the labor movement with the assistance of the U.S. government. Big business regarded the American trade union movement as "an un-American, illegal and infamous conspiracy." So did Attorney General Palmer. The raids served their purpose — weaken organized labor, keep wages low and postpone the organization of basic industry.**

*** *Labor's Untold Story***

**** John Kirby, president of the National Association of Manufacturers, in a 1913 pamphlet quoted in *Labor's Untold Story***

Graphic: Mike Konopacki

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Wobbly & North American News Music Tour Coming To A Wobbly City Near You

By Greg Giorgio

FW George Mann has teamed with Rik Palieri, frequent contributor to the Wobbly-dominated band Rose Tattoo, to reproduce the historic 1941 barnstorming tour of the Almanac Singers. The Almanacs then featured Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Lee Hayes and Fred Hellerman. The group formed specifically to agitate on labor’s behalf and to aid in union struggles. They penned a number of original songs—including Woody’s “Union Maid”—which have rallied millions of workers in the many decades hence.

Mann and Palieri are no strangers to labor struggles. In addition to George’s IWW red card, both hold membership in American Federation of Musicians (AFM) Local 1000, as did the late FW Utah Phillips before them. Both have strong ties to Phillips and have worked with folk and labor stalwarts like Pete Seeger and Anne Feeney.

Palieri said the story they want to tell is about a time and a singing group that have gotten lost in the netherworld between the sit-down strikes of Flint and the onset of an anti-fascist agenda that subverted a larger labor influence as the United States headed into World War II.



The Almanac Singers, 1941: Woody Guthrie, Lee Hays, Millard Lampell, Pete Seeger (left to right). Photo: woodyguthrie.de

“It’s about the tour,” Palieri explained in a stop to preview the concerts in a club performance in Altamont, N.Y. He would like to give audiences a sense of both the sincerity of purpose and the in-the-moment feel of those months when the Almanac Singers hit the road in 1941.

Mann and Palieri will kick off their Almanac Trail concerts in Pittsburgh on July 11. Other stops on the 24-date schedule include San Francisco, Detroit and New York City. They urge IWWs to get in touch and help spread the word in their areas.

For more information, see <http://www.almanactrail.com>. The site will post concert dates, venues and videos about the tour.

Pittsburgh IWW Remembers Carol Hamilton

By FW Robin Clarke

Most recently, Carol Vanderveer Hamilton taught writing at the University of Pittsburgh. An anarcho-Marxist scholar and distant descendant of Alexander Hamilton, Carol published widely on history and American politics in such venues as History News Network and OpEdNews. She received a master’s degree from Vermont College and a doctorate in English from the University of California, Berkeley. A book of her poems, “Blindsight,” was published by Carnegie Mellon Press in 2005. One review states, “Hamilton’s poetry is remarkable in its longing for another world, a world in which justice



Carol Hamilton (left) & the Pittsburgh IWW. Photo: Kenneth Miller

is either achieved or at least possible.” Carol, 62, passed away on April 10, 2013, after a long battle with cancer.

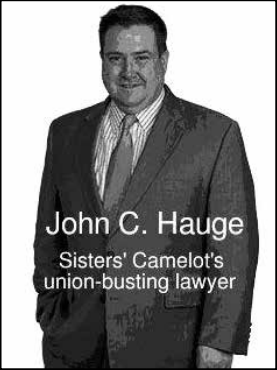
Sisters’ Camelot Refuses NLRB Settlement

By the Twin Cities IWW

On April 24, Sisters’ Camelot, a non-profit mobile food shelf engaged in a strike of its canvass workers, rejected a settlement offer from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), opting instead to fight the union in court. In order to do so, they have hired a right-wing, professional “union-avoidance” attorney, John C. Hauge from FordHarrison, a nation-wide anti-labor law firm, shocking the striking canvassers of the progressive organization. Concerned that Hauge is seeking to set precedent against independent contractors’ rights, the canvassers are seeking support from other unions and organizations.

The settlement offer included immediately rehiring fired union member ShugE Mississippi, paying his back wages, and posting a public apology at the Sisters’ Camelot office. Since the Sisters’ Camelot collective declined this offer, the NLRB will take Sisters’ Camelot to court to seek a binding order from a judge enforcing their decision. Less than 15 percent of unfair labor practice filings reach this stage, with the vast majority of employers negotiating prior to being brought before a judge.

Hauge has a long history of fighting workers attempting to win better conditions on the job, and advertises on his FordHarrison profile his ability to help businesses “avoid union incursion.” In the past several years, he has represented employers against multiple unions, such as the Service Employees Industrial Union (SEIU), UNITE HERE and others. In ad-



Graphic: iww.org

dition to this, he has represented multiple firms fighting charges of sexual harassment and discrimination by female employees, and touts on the same online profile that he has “represented an employer in Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) administrative action involving an employee fatality, with client completely exonerated of any liability.”

“It’s beyond comprehension that [the] Sisters’ Camelot’s managing collective would be less willing to sit down and work with us, their employees, than to work with someone who makes a living fighting against workers trying to better their conditions, against female workers battling sexual harassment, even against a family seeking damages for a worker who died on the job,” said Maria Wesslerle, a striking canvasser. “The settlement offer is entirely reasonable. It seems like they’d rather work with someone whose career is based on advancing exploitation, sexism and racism than admit their mistake. It’s like the principles of the organization have been thrown out the window.”

While the union is confident that the NLRB board will find in their favor and rule that the canvassers’ independent contractor status is due to misclassification, the stakes of a loss are such that they are calling on any and all labor unions, workers’ centers, or other groups invested in worker’s rights to demand that Sisters’ Camelot’s managing collective abandon this potentially disastrous course, end their relationship with Hauge and negotiate to end the strike.

IWW Supports Strike At Indiana University



IU rally on April 11. Photo: X364060

By X364060

The Indiana IWW General Membership Branch (GMB) helped support a campus-wide strike at Indiana University (IU) in Bloomington on April 11-12, organized by an Occupy-style general assembly made up of mostly students as well as some staff and faculty, called “IU on Strike.” The assembly had a list of six demands: immediately reduce tuition and eliminate fees; stop privatization and outsourcing at IU; end the wage freeze; the university must honor its promise to double the enrollment of African-American students to 8 percent; abolish

both House Bill (H.B.) 1402 and Senate Bill (S.B.) 590; and no retaliation for participating in or organizing the strike.

The strike actions consisted of students walking out of class, staff and faculty not showing up for work, two energetic marches, a rally at the doors of the board of trustees’ supposed “public” meeting (into which strike participants were denied access), and resistance to police during the occupation of space at Woodburn Hall which led to one arrest.

More than 400 people participated in the activities, 26 of whom were Wobblies.

The Indiana GMB had been in conversation with members of “IU on Strike” since November 2012. Two regular members of the general assemblies, who are also IWW members, reported on the strike at GMB meetings every month until the strike ended. Though the trustees continue to ruin the university for countless students, staff, faculty, and community members, the show of resistance that the strike produced was a positive occurrence and a step towards fighting austerity and injustice in public education.

A Tale Of Two Explosions

By Andy Piascik

On April 17, two days after the bombing at the Boston Marathon, the West Fertilizer plant in Texas exploded. Fourteen people are known to have been killed and close to 200 were injured. Approximately 150 buildings and homes were damaged or destroyed.

For days, we were witness to nonstop media coverage of the events in Massachusetts, culminating in the arrest of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. Once Tsarnaev was in custody, our television screens were alight with footage of local residents celebrating happily in the streets, complete with chants of “USA!” Though media coverage of the events in Texas was extensive, it was nowhere near that of the pursuit and killing of Tamerlan Tsarnaev and the arrest of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

The possibility that the bombing in Boston was the work of international terrorists was a major theme from the outset and the primary reason for the huge disparity in coverage of the two events. U.S. officials and media pundits have besieged us for years with the notion that we are at war, surrounded by enemies—they’re even in our midst!—so let’s be sure those SWAT teams have plenty of firepower, and by the way, let’s find another country to invade.

The explosion in Texas, on the other

hand, was far less newsworthy because it was a workplace accident and workplace accidents happen all the time. And that’s precisely the point: they happen all the time. The massive BP oil spill is just three years in the past, yet it is largely forgotten by the punditocracy. Never mind the massive ecological destruction and the 11 people who died as a result, or that not one single high-ranking BP executive or U.S. government official has been charged, let alone tried or convicted, for their deadly negligence. It’s old news and, more importantly, it’s business as usual.

Similarly relegated to the “no longer newsworthy” file is Massey Energy’s Upper Big Branch Mine disaster in West Virginia, which also occurred three short years ago and killed 29 miners. As with BP, no high-ranking Massey executives or government officials have been brought to trial or convicted, though the trail of deceit, cover-up, documented negligence and possible bribery is long enough to fill a phone book. Some degree of justice is still possible in the Texas case but it certainly won’t come as a result of any government or judicial vigilance. In all of these cases, as in hundreds if not thousands of others of similar magnitude, so-called oversight bodies such as the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

are so weak as to be a joke. Higher-ups who underfund and obstruct the work of such agencies are thus complicit each time a workplace blows up or burns to the ground.

In the case of the West Fertilizer plant, OSHA had not done an inspection there since 1985. In addition, the company was illegally storing large quantities of highly explosive materials in violation of EPA regulations and about which it lied to the EPA to avoid compliance. And the bending of already lax local zoning laws for a favored corporation made it possible for this massive time bomb to be located near a school, a hospital and hundreds of homes. Such criminal laxity is necessary, we are told, otherwise companies will move production elsewhere, as Walmart and others moved production to plants such as the one in Bangladesh that recently collapsed, killing over 1,000 workers.

We can anticipate that cries of outrage about state interference with “free” enterprise will continue unabated despite the deaths in Texas—indeed, despite the thousands who die each year at or because of their jobs. No matter that more people in the United States die each year from workplace accidents and illnesses than from lung cancer—if people don’t want to get blown up or burned alive at work, they should get rich and become capitalists like

those who own BP, Massey and West Fertilizer. Business is business after all, and profits trump all, including human life.

In no way is a business-controlled state such as we have in the United States the answer or the solution. However, in a period of unbridled corporate tyranny, the State can serve as a buffer between the Super Rich and the rest of us, depending on how well-organized we are. The EPA and OSHA, not to mention Social Security, Medicare and hundreds of other life-improving laws and programs, came into being precisely because large numbers of people stood up in opposition to the corporate agenda. The key to turning the tide against the depravity of the business class and their lapdogs at Fox and General Electric TV is more such organization.

If we organize and build movements to sufficient strength, perhaps those responsible for workplace explosions that kill people will get the same treatment that other violent sociopaths get, no matter their Brooks Brothers suits and Ivy League degrees. If they resist being brought to justice, perhaps they will be hunted down by SWAT teams and people will celebrate their arrests in the streets. And perhaps someday, those who truly menace us and the rest of the world—corporate elites—will be rendered so weak as to be incapable of doing any more harm.

May Day Around The World

Indiana IWW Celebrates May Day With A Rally/Picnic

By Michael White

This May Day, Indiana Wobblies held a rally/picnic at Garfield Park in Indianapolis. After a few opening remarks from certain members, we had four separate workshops set up throughout the day for folks: one on the history of May Day, one on industrial unionism, one centered around anti-capitalist economic theory, and one was a short introduction to organizing on the job. We had lots of good, free food prepared beforehand and many people contributed homemade items. There was a lot of great labor and folk music from those Wobs who brought their instruments. Someone even made a soapbox for people to use to give their speeches and workshops from! We had a turnout of about 50 people from all across

the state. We had several people join our event just upon passing and finding out about it. We managed to sign up a few new members there, too. The event lasted about six hours before we finally vacated the premises. Altogether it was a very good rally/picnic—only a few cops and there was beautiful sunshine all day long. It was a very successful first May Day for the Indiana IWW. We are already laying plans for next May Day in Indianapolis, and we are setting our sights high.



FWs sing union songs; J.P. Wright gives the opening speech in Indianapolis.

Photos: X364060

Boston Wobblies Paint The Town Red & Black



FW Kendra Moyer.

Photo: Le Le LeChat



Boston GMB at the Funeral for Capitalism.

Photo: Geoff Carens



FW Geoff Carens.

Photo: Le Le LeChat

By Geoff Carens

The Boston General Membership Branch (GMB) participated in at least four May Day events this year, including marches in Lynn, East Boston, Chelsea and Revere, a speak-out at City Hall Plaza, and a nighttime Funeral for Capitalism. FW Kendra Moyer and I both spoke for the IWW at the City Hall event.

Mass March Wobbles D.C. On May Day

By Tom Jayman

Days before May Day, there were posts showing up on Facebook. Nobody was sure what to make of them at first: “Hey, we’re with the White Student Union. Are we invited?” Eh, just some people trolling the page and probably not worth taking too seriously.

I missed the pre-march talks as I was on a supply run (gotta have your IWW flags!). D.C. is a lot like other cities when there’s a rally, event or march—you get a lot of the same crowd. This is of course not a 100 percent accurate account of who was around, but the march was much of the remnants of D.C. Occupy, Progressive Labor Party (PLP) members, Anarchist Alliance D.C. folks, and many members of the D.C. IWW.

I think about every other person was carrying a red flag of sorts, either IWW, PLP, or just some red cloth on a bamboo stick. There is a ton of bamboo around D.C. and it makes for a pretty effective flag pole. The “Whose Day? Our Day! What Day? May Day” chant could probably be heard for blocks as approximately 150 of us marched down 14th Street NW. We had a bit of literature that we handed out as we went, but it was nearly a contest with the PLP to fill peoples’ hands with literature. There were these great stickers that were handed out with a picture of guillotine that said “The one cool thing about being poor is, like, rising up against the rich.” There were also leaflets about the history of May Day. Every person

on the street must have left with a folder full of literature. “Whose Streets? Our Streets!”—the perennial chant of the Left—was also shouted but it then degenerated into “Whose Streets? No Streets! Tear up the concrete!” Anti-civ sentiments are too common these days, and unfortunately are just another issue for the Left to deal with. The police were out in full force as well. We had the typical police escort but it went above and beyond that. Over some trivial altercation, one demonstrator was tackled to the ground and arrested early on, and so the shouting matches with the cops started. We kept marching and after a minute we were coming up to a Gap store.

Fairly recently, a factory in Bangladesh collapsed, killing over 1,000 people. This was after the place had been ruled unfit for use due to structural issues with the building. Since most capitalists are heartless scum, they still sent workers in to their death. The Gap is a part of this production chain and there was a Gap store on the march route so we had to do something about it. People started rushing into the store. It was hoped that everyone would file in but only about 25 people made it. In the ensuing chaos of cops barricading the door and rushing in, a display got knocked over, and with this came the pretense for the police to start throwing human beings out the door. We had one marcher suffer a head injury. Literature was slid into a lot of the clothing so hopefully someone will find out about



Banner drop.

Photo: Diane K.



D.C. Wobblies march down 14th Street NW.

Photo: Diane Krauthamer

the wicked nature of capitalism, especially clothing production. There was another arrest at The Gap and a member of the march got a black eye from a punch by a cop in a one-sided confrontation.

After about 15 minutes, everybody got back to marching. There was a solidarity banner drop organized along the route with a 10 foot banner reading “Capitalism=Crisis!!!” I know some people dropped out of the march as it went. The police were very confrontational and some of us were too. The majority stayed on as we approached our terminal location, The White House. And who would be there to greet us but some fascists!

One person headed up and started shouting “What brings you fuckers out here!?! This is our day!” The exchange was pretty heated right off the bat. There were eight of them, one with an apartheid South Africa flag, another with a confeder-

ate flag and a “Don’t Tread On Me” flag. Things were getting pretty up close and personal, while U.S. Secret Service agents hung out about 15 feet away. A scuffle took place that resulted in a burned confederate flag, a torn-to-shreds apartheid flag and no “Don’t Tread On Me” flag for the fascists. For a second there, we bashed the fash. The police picked up two people, one of ours and one of theirs. Word from the fascists in one of their internet reports on the event said that the police let the fascist go a couple blocks away and that he was “glad somebody is doing something about them. We have to deal with them all the time.” The Right knows that the police will take their side. They may have been outnumbered, but the police are their de facto ally, and cops have guns. As workers though, we’ve still got the power on the shop floor, and if we organize, nothing can stop us. This is May Day. This is our day.

May Day Around The World

Her Yer Taksim: May Day In Turkey



Demonstrations marred by police violence in Istanbul.

By Tom Levy and Yusuf Cemal, X375214

The May Day demonstration in Istanbul this year was marred by police violence. At root were government orders prohibiting protesters from entering Istanbul’s Taksim Square. Claiming that ongoing construction made it unsafe for crowds to gather, a heavily militarized police presence guarded the site. When protesters sought to occupy the space, police responded violently, leaving many seriously injured. Demonstrators were attacked with water cannons, steel batons

and plastic bullets. With their tear gas, the police turned shiny Istanbul into a foggy London-like hellhole. Using the canisters as bullets, police shot three people in the head, leaving two with fractured skulls. One of them lost an eye. Four workers were seriously injured, and it is unknown has many more were wounded.

This violence is, unfortunately, was not without precedence. Taksim Square, historically a center for political and social protest, became the scene of a bloody massacre on May Day 1977 when shots were fired from a nearby building. In the

ensuing panic, police used water cannons and other heavy-handed crowd control techniques, leading to further casualties. Despite a death toll of 36, no one has ever been convicted of the crime and many believe it to be the work of agents provocateurs and/or state security forces. To this day, the phrase “Her Yer Taksim” (Everywhere is Taksim) can be found graffitied on sidewalks and walls all around the country.

May Day has always been a vibrant and militant celebration in Turkey. Rallies in Istanbul regularly attract hundreds of thousands. Demonstrations and marches in Ankara, Izmir, Eskishehir, and other cities around the country bring in workers, trade unionists and activists by the tens of thousands.

Although May Day was officially recognized as a national holiday in 2010, recent years have seen the Turkish state increasingly crack down on militant, independent protest, specifically banning and limiting protests in Taksim. Why this pattern of repression? Because the State believes a revitalized workers’ movement could be born from a mass demonstration in this historically significant and powerful place. The government

knows the workers movement’s weakness: we didn’t organize our class brothers and sisters in our workplaces. We don’t have tough roots in factories, offices, shops or mines. So, we cannot give any response against these insults and these oppressions except press statements and tiny, isolated and weak meetings. A general strike? Any forceful demonstration? Any deed? Any effective gesture? Not yet.

Therefore, we must organize ourselves in the workplace. If we want a victory, if we want to organize any demonstrations in this historically working-class place, we need real power. The government must know that if they insult us, their wealth, their profits and workplace peace will be harmed. We need real unions with real roots in workplaces.



Taksim Square.

Photo: Tom Levy

Photo: Nazım Serhat Fırat

Thousands Of Fellow Workers March In London



Photos: Sean Carleton

By Sean Carleton, London GMB

Members of the London IWW General Membership Branch walked with thousands of fellow workers in the 2013 London May Day march from the historic leftist stronghold of Clerkenwell Green to Trafalgar Square. It was a beautiful day to celebrate past struggles and to renew our faith in the fight for a world without bosses.

May Day Activities Around Scotland

By X348444

The Clydeside IWW participated in four days of activities around May Day. On May 1, stalls were set up in central Glasgow by the IWW alongside the Anarchist Federation. One new member joined. On the east coast, the Edinburgh IWW took part in May Day rally on Saturday, May 4. On Sunday, May 5, the General Membership Branch participated in the Scottish Trades Union Council (TUC) May Day march in Glasgow.

On Monday, May 6, the branch was represented in The Walk of Shame around companies taking advantage of the government’s workfare program. Finally, on Friday, May 10, Dumfries & Gal-



Clydeside Wobblies on May 1.

Photo: strugglepedia

loway IWW member and author of “Rebel Alliances” (AK Press) Ben Franks gave a talk in Glasgow on anarchism & Marxism. The meeting was co-sponsored by Clydeside IWW with a merchandise stall.

In other news: Fellow Worker Marion Hersh of Clydeside has been elected Women’s Officer of the IWW European Regional Administration (ERA).

Wobblies Defend Fired Bus Driver In London

Continued from 1

driving behavior of a another driver who had not only endangered her own safety, but also that of her baby and other road users.

This comes on the heels of Fellow Worker Gerry Downing’s reinstatement on April 30, after he successfully appealed his own unfair dismissal. Gerry, from the Cricklewood Bus Garage, was also sacked on spurious charges.

The London IWW has led a global campaign to defend Oscar. An impressive demonstration of support was gathered in a public meeting that took place on April 29, called by the Brent Trades Union Council. Several sacked bus drivers attended, and their stories were similar: harsh dismissal decisions for what were minor incidents. Following this, IWW activists have held demonstrations and leafleted bus drivers, all of whom have voiced their support for Oscar as rank-

and-file bus drivers are showing wide-ranging support for a defense campaign against these increasing victimizations. An online IWW campaign has led to Metroline being flooded with emails from around the world.

Unfortunately, despite this campaign and the facts being on our side, the company has stuck to their guns, defending the unfair dismissal. The IWW deeply thanks all those who have stood with Oscar so far, making an injury to one an injury to all. The union is now taking legal advice on next steps.

Further, the IWW sends our encouragement and support to the London bus drivers to keep the resistance going and refuse to sign any new contracts. Which-ever union you belong to, we must hold together, because they can’t force us if we ALL refuse.

Justice for Oscar! Justice for bus workers!

Special

The IWW And Earth First! - Part 2: The Crucible

By X344543

The IWW connection to Earth First! was, believe it or not, woven in the woof. In fact, as far as the two organizations' struggles with the timber bosses go, both could be said to have been forged from the same crucible: the Humboldt County town of Eureka in northwestern California, the de facto capital of the Redwood Empire.

Long before the IWW joined in Earth First!'s (ultimately successful) struggles to save Headwaters Forest in Humboldt County, the roots of that struggle began with the workers' struggles against the timber bosses.

In the formative years of the timber industry in the United States and Canada—the last third of the 19th century—working conditions were abysmal. Then, as now, timber was one of the top five most dangerous industrial jobs in the world. Timber workers were subjected to long hours, dangerous working conditions, unsanitary labor camps, company towns (where the employer was literally the government) and no job security. The bosses, meanwhile, were making a killing on the backs of both the workers and the environment. Vast amounts of standing timber were held by what would soon evolve into modern timber corporations, and not too few of them had acquired their holdings through graft and very questionable homesteading laws.

This was no exception in the Redwood Empire. In Eureka, the California Redwood Company (CRC), whose owners were European capitalists, was one of the worst examples. Workers at the CRC, many of whom were populists—including a butcher by the name of Charles Keller, who was a member of the International Workingmen's Association (IWA)—formed the very first union of timber workers in North America to affiliate with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). Together, they exposed the CRC's graft, in spite of vigilante mobs organized by the CRC and the other companies as well as yellow journalism and slander by the local press. The union didn't secure recognition, but they did improve working conditions slightly, and the CRC was forced to shut down.

The story of the IWW's Lumber Workers Industrial Union and its successful fight for the eight-hour day is well documented elsewhere, but what is not well known is that, while the IWW never gained much of a foothold in the Redwood Empire (its successes were concentrated mostly in Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana), its influence was felt there nonetheless.

In order to keep the IWW from gaining any support from among the local timber workers, two timber companies based in Humboldt County, The Pacific Lumber Company (PL) and The Hammond Lumber Company (HLC), introduced two innovations that would give the employers the upper hand in the class struggle which would ultimately have devastating consequences for the environment as well. HLC introduced the "bonus system," under which they paid productivity bonuses to the department that achieved the highest production quotas, expressly to undermine shop-floor solidarity. This had the effect of not only inducing the workers to compete against each other and willingly enable a speed up, it facilitated the more rapid liquidation of the redwoods, because HLC cut their forests faster than they grew back.

Most of the other companies increased their production to keep up. Meanwhile, many other companies implemented and expanded the bonus system. Some companies, like Weyerhaeuser, who had a particularly intense ideological aversion to the IWW, as well as the more conservative business unions, even went a step further, introducing the contract logging, or "gyppo," system throughout the Pacific Northwest.

This was done in reaction to the IWW's

winning of the eight-hour day in 1918 by way of their innovative "strike on the job." The Wobbly organizers knew that their victory was temporary and anticipated that the bosses would expand the gyppo system to undermine it. The IWW had plans to respond to the threat, and had historical currents flowed differently, they might have succeeded by using solidarity unionism, but different forms of unionism, namely that of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) eclipsed the IWW due to the influence of the ascendant communist currents.

Although the gyppo system took several decades to become the dominant method of employment among logging crews, this system ultimately made it nearly impossible for any union (other than the IWW) to organize loggers, thus making the bargaining position of the more heavily unionized mill workers far weaker.

Meanwhile, in 1909, PL began charting a different course from their fellow capitalist operations. Sensing that they could keep their wage slaves loyal to the company, they began paying their workers generous benefits and introducing a variety of social programs. These changes weren't introduced out of pure altruism, however. On the contrary—and the PL bosses made no secret of this—they were expressly implemented to keep the IWW out, as can be seen below:

"Get your men loyal and keep them so. Let this replace loyalty to a union. The spirit is what you want in your men. Ten good men will accomplish as much as fifteen ordinary laborers if the spirit and good will is there. Treat them right and they will treat you right." (emphasis added, A E Blockinger, Pacific Lumber General Manager, writing in the *Pioneer Western Lumberman*, July 15, 1911)

And the bosses succeeded. When the IWW strike for the eight-hour day shook Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, PL simply paid more benefits and added more programs.

The IWW succeeded in winning the eight-hour day, but the credit was given to a company union established by the bosses (in reaction to the IWW) called the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen (LLLL). Membership in the LLLL was compulsory, and the U.S. military, under the command of Col. Brice Disque was dispatched to enforce its directive. However, Disque's heavy-handedness was as bad as the bosses, leading to even some of the soldiers under his command to strike on the job like the IWW. Sensing defeat, Disque and the bosses "granted" the eight-hour day, and only succeeded in keeping the IWW from immediately regaining momentum by further implementing programs similar to those instituted by PL in Humboldt County.

The IWW rightfully denounced both the LLLL and PL attempts to steal their thunder, but couldn't mount a response before the ascendant Communist Party stole the IWW's thunder on the Left and among the working class in the 1920s and 1930s. As a result, much of the union organizing among timber workers was done by the CIO, whose left wing was largely aligned with the Communist Party.

Meanwhile, PL remained nonunion, but (unlike most of its competitors) it also retained its paternalistic culture for almost 70 years. During that time, its owners, who were all part of the same family and only the second group to ever control the company after acquiring it in 1909 from its original founders, became known as the "lumber company in the white hats," both in terms of how they treated their workers as well as how they treated the environment.

While other firms liquidated their forests for quick profits, PL logged sustainably so that by the 1980s they owned the largest inventory of privately-owned standing old growth redwoods in the



Graphic: Country Activist

world.

Ironically, these sustainability practices would have likely resulted from workers' control as well. The IWW called for sustainable logging, primarily because it resulted in safer working conditions and job security, but also because the union recognized that unsustainable logging only aided the bosses in their consolidation of profits.

PL's uniqueness would be their ultimate undoing. By the 1980s, PL was cash rich, with a diversified portfolio of assets that included farmland and a welding business, their sizable and sustainably logged timber holdings, the company town of Scotia (just south of Eureka), and a well-funded pension fund. While other logging firms were quickly mowing down their forests and debt financing their companies in the neoliberal Reaganite era of the 1980s, PL was an anomaly, a rare example of a business that actually followed the examples set forth in naïve, high school economics text books. By doing so, PL made itself an attractive target for the ruthless capitalist raiders that had taken over the reins of capitalism at the time, and it wasn't long before the company was picked off like a sitting duck.

Indeed, in late 1985, a corporate raider named Charles Hurwitz, aided by the infamous Ivan Boesky, took advantage of lax regulation over corporate securities trading and managed—through a very complex series of stock trades, not all of which were legal—to acquire enough shares of the Pacific Lumber Company to induce its owners to sell the rest of it to him.

Many shareholders, including descendants of the family dynasty that had owned the company for years, attempted to fight back and filed a barrage of (ultimately unsuccessful) lawsuits in the process. They were joined by many of the company's 800 workers who approached the International Woodworkers Union (IWA, a founding affiliate of the CIO in the 1930s) and also took out a full-page ad in the *Eureka Times-Standard* protesting the takeover. Such activity, at a company that had never had a union in its century of existence, was unprecedented. All of those in opposition to the takeover feared that Hurwitz and his Maxxam Inc. would liquidate the company's assets and abolish its sustainable logging practices. These fears turned out to be correct.

Because Hurwitz had incurred huge debts in the process of taking over PL, to meet his debt obligation he liquidated much of the company's assets and tripled the rate of cutting. Mill workers were forced to work 60-hour weeks, and a bunch of gyppo firms were brought in to handle the additional logging. The IWA, being bound to the AFL-CIO's ineffective business union model, was unable to organize these new workers, and the union organizing drive fizzled. In spite of the increased jobs and lucrative overtime, longtime PL employees and environmentalists both agreed that the long-term future of the company and Humboldt County looked bleak. PL was no longer "the guys in the white hats," but was now as rapacious and greedy as most other logging corporations that dominated the Pacific Northwest.

There were many local environmental organizations that opposed these changes (and were sympathetic to the workers' plight as well), but they were busy fighting already raging environmental battles, including opposing herbicide spraying, offshore oil drilling, and clearcutting by other logging companies in the region. Somebody new would have to take on this new struggle. Fortunately, two recently arrived activists, Darryl Cherney and Greg King, did, and they would do so under the banner of Earth First!

Earth First! had already existed for five years and had even taken on timber companies for a couple of years, beginning in 1983 in the nearby Siskiyou National Forest in Oregon, but in those cases, the protests had focused on public lands rather than private holdings. Also, in the previous cases, Earth First!'s actions tended to alienate timber workers. This time—at least initially—the new Earth First! chapter would attempt to ally with the workers, because it was fairly obvious they shared a common enemy.

Earth First! couldn't organize workers at the point of production however, and the business unions had proven incapable, but there was one union that could succeed. It was only a matter of time before it would make its presence known, and that crucible of forest radicalism, Humboldt County in California would work its magic once again. To be continued...

Next installment: "Uneasy Beginnings."

Wobbly Arts

This Land Was Stolen From You And Me

By Ken Lawless

This land is not your land, this land is not my land,
It belongs to the super-rich from the Hamptons on Long Island.
From palatial estates in Palm Springs and Beverley Hills,
They control politicians, financiers, and shills.
We're exploited by their haute bourgeoisie.
This land was stolen from you and me.

Endless war keeps us deep in debt,
Our great-grandchildren will be paying yet.
There's industrial pollution in our land, air and sea.
From our Full Spectrum Dominance no one on earth is free.
This land was stolen from you and me.

Working people are under attack,
Austerity is the weapon, blue collars get the sack.
Our pensions are eroded, migrant workers are scapegoated,
The American Dream is a fossilized memory.
This land was stolen from you and me.

Workers create the wealth, that much is certain,
Yet we're ruled by Monsanto and Halliburton,
By Exxon-Mobil, by J. P. Morgan chase.



Graphic: blog.richmond.edu

Only rats can run in Wall Street's rat race;
It's a rat infested plutocracy.
This land was stolen from you and me.

We live in a sold-out-and-bought land, under the Royal Bank of Scotland;
It was bailed out by a hundred seventy billion dollars.
That's our cue, when everybody hollers:
"No bank is too big to fail!" "No banker is too rich to jail!"
Criminal bankers looted our treasury, trashed our economy,
Used Libor illegally.
This land was stolen from you and me.

Corporate executives dwell in marble halls
but their mug shots should be on Post Office walls,
for wage theft hijacking, for hydrofracking,
for empty factories rusting, for union busting,
for assassinations by predator drones,
for extraordinary rendition to torture zones,
for war's atrocious atrocities,
this land was stolen from you and me.

From vast oceans
To wheat fields rolling,
From Alaska to the Caribbean Sea,
This land was stolen from you and me.



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Review

“Paradise Lot” Teaches The Importance Of Food Sustainability

Toensmeier, Eric, and Jonathan Bates (contributor). Paradise Lot: Two Plant Geeks, One-Tenth of an Acre, and the Making of an Edible Garden Oasis in the City. White River Jct., VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2013. Paperback, 248 pages, \$19.95.

By John MacLean

Eric Toensmeier, in “Paradise Lot,” sees permaculture as the bringing together of “traditional indigenous land management practices, ecological design” and sustainability into a whole which works “like a natural ecosystem.” He and contributor Jonathan Bates are inspired by the idea that people can have a “positive impact” on neglected landscapes and are not condemned by the past. Their practice is dedicated to “perennial food plants” which they laud as low maintenance, multi-functional, and able to produce crops over many years; these plants also “build soil...control erosion, improve rainfall capture, and sequester carbon.” The friends, Bates and Toensmeier, used polycultures, modeled after the “three sisters” (corn, beans and squash). These combinations have been underutilized in colder climates and have also been proven to help with pest control. One is left to wonder, though, whether an indigenous vision can come forth within the confines of an imposed system of private property or through the workings of a destructive inequality pushing money system.

The big day came for Bates and Toensmeier when they decided to put their “fancy language goals and sophisticated theories to the test, on a real piece of ground—a compacted, bare, abandoned” bit of earth in Holyoke, Mass. The two recognized their need to move closer to people. After moving in they studied the lot next to their house, mapping the presence and changing patterns of sun and shade and the space’s varied soils and slopes. They found that “drainage,” the absence of “organic matter” and soil compaction would all need to be addressed, but, also, that their pH and lead levels were not significant. The site for a greenhouse stood out, as it received sunlight through the seasons. The

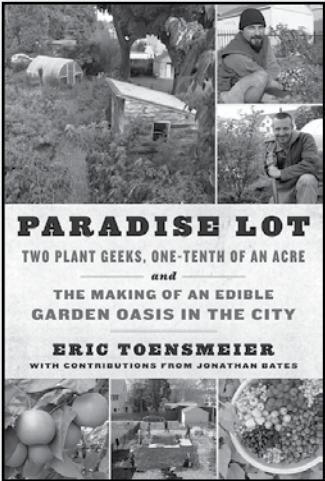
two friends rated their new place as “one step up from a Walmart parking lot.” They set themselves to “site repair” even though many “sustainable practices, essential for the long-term survival of humanity, are currently illegal.”

The two friends used sheet mulching to begin building up their soil. The technique involves laying down a biodegradable weed barrier like cardboard and then piling on “soil amendments” (lime, fertilizer, greensand, even diluted urine) along with layers of organic material (shredded leaves, grass clippings, straw, sawdust and food scrapes). You literally compost over a large area. Perennial vegetables can be harvested for months, in the spring, during the time it takes annual crops to be ready for eating. The partners utilized sorrel, water celery, Caucasian spinach shoots, sunchokes, skirret, Chinese artichoke, groundnuts, ramps, scallions, fuki, asparagus, sweet cicely and garlic chives. They also introduced fruit trees, which they were finally in a position to attend to long enough to harvest from; these included natives like the carrion insect pollinated pawpaw, chinquapin bush chestnuts, beach plums and American persimmon. They found that once their soil became healthier, stone fruit trees were better able to resist the peach tree borer. In hindsight the two wished that they had done more about their compacted soil, as simply “making a compost pile on top of concrete” is not ideal for rooting trees and crops, as it can take decades for soil to be naturally loosened by worms. Their building of a small “edible water garden” worked best, in this regard, as the Chinese water lotus and dropwort had little contact with the lower down “infertile and contaminated” layers. Three years into the effort, with improved soil and habitat, their small backyard garden came to life; this is summed up in the phrase “sleep, creep, [and] leap,” to which can be added “reap” for all the perennial foods arriving.

The excess vegetation can be struggled against, or it can be put to use. Much of the matter can be burned up, and the two friends, while initially “intimidated by the idea of breaking the law,” turned to raising chickens to help as well. Jonathan Bates relates how the compacted earth, along with home and street design, often serve to “shed water away” from where it is needed. Helping to aerate long-pressed soil can slow, spread and sink water as it passes through the places where we live; combining this with manure-pack composting, the adding in of micronutrients from things as simple as leaving rocks in place, and the “growing [of] earth worms,” can go a long way toward regenerating soil.

The berry growing strategy of the friends involves “planting small numbers of a great diversity of fruits” and drawing the season out as long as possible. In this way they are able to pick honeyberries first thing in the spring, harvest “ridiculous riches” all through the summer and well into December still be picking wintergreen and lingonberries. A lack of space prevented them from using chestnut and walnut trees, but species like the earlier mentioned American persimmon can grow to be as large as a mature oak tree, and given this, their youthful forest garden is nowhere near its ultimate potential. The friends patiently resist using any sprays and try to have varied flowers blooming throughout the growing season, and in this way they create habitat and seek to draw in beneficial insects. In terms of soil nitrogen fixation, mimosa trees and alders make a fine “overstory,” creating “an environment underneath conducive to food production,” but when choosing a groundcover, you have to take care that it does not swamp other plants, as they can be aggressive. A good “understory” is edible, thrives in the shade and acts as “living mulch, protecting the soil and suppressing the germination of weed seeds.”

Toensmeier maintains that prior to the



Graphic: beforeitsnews.com

arrival of Europeans in North America, indigenous people had managed “the largest example of permaculture the world has ever seen.” Our goal should not be a reduction in our impacts on the natural world, but a maximization of them, in a positive direction. The two friends marveled at the new arrivals to their small food forest: “Our emerging backyard agro-ecosystem was attracting delicate forest organisms to patrol its understory. A woodland amphibian that could never have survived in our yard in 2004 was now at home in the shade and soil we had created.” There were less-welcome guests, too, like spider mites, but even these were taken care of by predatory lady bugs. The only thing holding the small food forest back was the absence “of a larger...contiguous healthy ecosystem.” Bates writes that plants “taught [him] to see abundance” as a natural state that had been kept hidden. He asks why this abundance can’t be expanded “outward into the community, city, region, [and] world?”

There are things about “Paradise Lot” that one can question. You can recognize that most people don’t have backyards, do not occupy the earth like Movimento Sem Terra activists in Brazil, but still they get blamed for the collapse of housing bubbles. You can point to how during the fight over raising chickens in Holyoke, the friends thought the time not right, and pulled away, while referencing more important efforts against child obesity, but all of this is still connected to inequality; you can rightly resist the idea of life being nothing but a business development endeavor; and finally, appropriations of Native American pasts, so far down our cruel way, seem desperate and in denial. But, at the same time, permaculture can orient us toward patterns of living which are freeing. Instead of praying for jobs, and being made to face scarcity, or being lead around by politicians, on about how there is never enough, you can turn to plants, and see the beautiful face of this earth, and how it’s natural state is abundance. Toward the end of the book you read: “Our experience...refutes the notion of scarcity.”

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Concrete Ways to Support Families in Social Justice Movements and Communities
Victoria Law and China Martens

OURS TO MASTER AND TO OWN
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IMMANUEL NESS AND DARIO AZZELLINI

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International News

Unions In Contemporary Lithuania: A Historical Perspective

By Evaldas Balčiūnas

In Lithuania, there are labor unions... in fact, one can even say that there are many. But in reality working people in this country feel vulnerable and unprotected, a situation which has prompted critics to characterize all existing unions together as a “big piece of shit,” which is sub-divided into four, smaller pieces (i.e., the national union confederations). I don’t think it is productive to delineate the differences between the “shits”—they are all shit after all—but it is important to understand the historical context and the evolution of the labor movement since the late Soviet era.

The Soviet Roots of Contemporary Unions

Contemporary Lithuanian unions have two important, but by no means equivalent, roots. The first is the Perestroika-era revival of a politicized working class movement (including the Workers, Teachers and Scientists unions, and other pro-independence groups in companies); the second is the Soviet-era trade union system, which encompassed nearly 100 percent of the working population. Soviet trade unions ruled the welfare system in addition to taking care of safety at work. They were in charge of the administration of worker safety, addressed labor disputes, and had an extensive and well-developed bureaucracy. Through “collective bargaining” they controlled investment in social infrastructure, such as apartments, vacation homes, kindergartens and other similar structures.

In comparison to today, during the Perestroika era democratic practices in unions and the defense of working class rights were much more prevalent. Company administrators feared the unions’ work safety inspectors. Workers could also address their grievances through labor relations commissions, which issued binding decisions to bosses. In other words, the bureaucratic problem-solving methods of unions in the Soviet era represented one opportunity for workers to defend themselves against serious exploitation. Democracy also existed within the unions; I witnessed how candidates selected by the “center” were rejected by workers. However, that doesn’t obviate the fact that Soviet unions were part of the exploitative Soviet system, perhaps giving it a more human face.

Perestroika policies fueled possibilities for labor organizing, resulting in a new workers’ movement that was critical of Soviet-style exploitation and union bureaucracy, in addition to questioning their lack of interference in politics. This question was central since the foundation of the Workers’ Union (Darbininkų sąjunga, or DS), the biggest workers’ opposition organization (officially founded in 1989, but already organizing workers earlier). DS activists worked within existing trade unions, seeking to gain influence, or they had open conflicts with them. In the enterprise where I worked, out of 1,000 employees there were eight DS activists. We decided to take advantage of the trade union’s constitution, which said that any three of its members could create a separate primary organization. We wrote an application and a few months later we found out that we were expelled from the union. Unfortunately for us, at the same time we needed to take care of one of our friends who had broken his leg at work. As there were only eight of us, we didn’t have the resources to help him. That’s how the Soviet-era union bureaucracy tried to “educate” us.

Despite these conflicts, the DS continued to grow as a nation-wide organization. In 1990, I became the chairperson of the DS of Siauliai and the organization grew quickly to include a couple thousand dues-paying members. However, the tumultuous growth caused considerable ideological confusion within the organization. For example, it continued to be influenced

by nationalist and conservative politics espoused by manipulative members. I was doomed when, in the name of the DS, I supported Afghan war veterans who had squatted and repaired a building in a prestigious area of the city. The nationalist “Sajūdis” inspired actors, after months of absence, were reminded about their DS membership and mobilized to retract this support.

In summary, towards the twilight of the Soviet era, old Soviet trade unions remained entrenched and dominant within the industrial and bureaucratic infrastructure, but a new workers’ movement based in grassroots organizing was gaining strength, even as it exhibited internal divisions and conflicts.

The Ravages of Neoliberalism in Independent Lithuania

In 1991, after a failed coup, the Soviet Union ceased to exist and Lithuania’s independence was recognized internationally. Western leaders announced the triumph of capitalism, and the ex-Soviet states received Western “assistance” to guide the transition to a “market-based” system. What followed was a massive economic experiment, as states were urged to implement shock therapy through massive privatization, deregulation, and trade liberalization. The result was disastrous for workers especially.

In Lithuania, a new ruling elite emerged, which used their connections and positions to amass wealth and property. For example, the very apartments that had been squatted by the Afghan war veterans were divided and privatized by the new elite. Workers were not passive in this process. Anxiety about privatization and the prospect of unemployment caused by closed-down enterprises triggered the first national-scale strike. When I consulted with Siauliai and national strike committees, I learned that employees were not satisfied with the terms of privatization, the murkiness of the process, as well as the involvement of buyers with criminal histories who tried to buy out jobs (to gain rights to the enterprise) and often resorted to violence. The strike was lost because the workers did not try to halt the privatization process. In reality, they did receive significant concessions, which created a situation in which some were able to buy up shares in their workplaces cheaply and others were able to sell their shares for higher prices (or for profitable resale). This privatization process broke up worker solidarity and just a few workers were left in their workplaces. However, the strike did force the state to reform the privatization regulations to address some of the most loathsome and criminal aspects of capitalism that had been unleashed.

But the lack of an ideological basis further eroded the country’s workers’ movement. In 1992, the Siauliai DS was the only organization to publicly commemorate May 1 with a rally of 1,000 people. How did it happen that May 1 became an alien holiday for the DS? First of all, the political movement with which the DS had aligned itself, the independence movement, was now in power. The leader of the DS had become the state comptroller, and he used his power to harness the “strength” of the DS and to oppose disruption by unions to state policies. But there were also serious changes that took place within the union. As an emerging organization the DS had not accumulated sufficient experience and resources, and the economic uncertainty of the early 1990s made this a significant problem. In general, skyrocketing inflation and economic and political uncertainty caused a scramble for assets, further eroding worker solidarity.

The Scramble for Assets: Turmoil and Confusion

The precarious economic situation of the early 1990s, exacerbated by neoliberal policies, encouraged efforts to split old



Participants of a DS seminar from SAC, Sweden, in 1992.

Photo: anarchija.lt

trade union assets. But the marginalization of unions was broader than that. Ideologically, trade unions represented vestiges of the old regime and were now seen as obsolete. Unions were further marginalized when a new state structure was created to provide the welfare functions that the unions had provided. In factories and at workplaces, the workers councils that had become formal governing structures during the Perestroika era were eliminated.

Unions had to deal with complex organizational challenges, and union workers had to worry about feeding their families. Therefore, a number of them left to work in the emerging state social structures. Many organizations could not survive in the turmoil of transition; they collapsed along with the firms and factories they were a part of.

However, some members of the old union elite benefited from the privatization process by using their advantageous positions to buy up shares in factories and companies for favorable prices and conditions. They participated in the scramble for assets and encouraged the liquidation of democracy at workplaces so that no one could prohibit their shady deals. Even as individuals from the old union elite prospered throughout the privatization process, in the new regime, the old trade unions themselves lacked legitimacy and were vulnerable to state efforts to appropriate union assets. The DS chairperson, Kazimieras Uoka, was invited to “negotiate” with the new prime minister, Gediminas Vagnorius, over union assets. I suspect that there were no negotiations but everything had already been discussed and decided. In this “negotiation” process, the DS was allocated money (100,000 banknotes) to serve as a material base for the organization. Surprised by this money which “fell from the sky,” the DS council was called to make a decision on what to do with it. They decided to use it to pay wages to DS chairpersons in cities and towns, a decision which would significantly change relations within the organization for the worse. Now the organization’s leaders had the resources to buy the votes they needed to institute favorable decisions for themselves. Later when the money ran out, as far as I know, the central apparatus of the DS was supported by the American Institute for Free Labor Development (the AFL-CIO’s controversial CIA-affiliated institute). Later the DS changed its name to LDS Solidarumas, and even though it has experienced reputable scandals, a part of the organization’s activists have years of experience in conflict resolution at work. Their services on behalf of members serve to redeem, in part, the corruption and fraud in the organization’s leadership.

The Rise of the Social Partnership and the Decline of the Working Class

In two other confederations (national trade union centers) the situation

still looks bleak, in part because of their participation in the “social partnership” agreements. The Labor Federation (Darbo Federacija) just lives off of the social partnership. The other major trade union center, the Lithuanian Trade Union Confederation, has some active organizations. For example, in Klaipeda, the Švyturys beer brewery’s union had the persistence to sue for the right to strike. The verdict was unfavorable for the union: the brewery was found to be a company vital to the public, so much so that the strike would cause a public disruption. This demonstrates how absurd the social partnership has become, and how comprising it has been for the unions involved. They declare a considerable membership list, but they are not interested in organizing workers or attracting new members. They are satisfied with the existing primary organizations and their members, and provide a minimal service: legal advice, mediation talks, courses about the social partnership. But perhaps the most egregious actions of the national trade union centers has been the signing of a social partnership agreement that led to the implementation of drastic austerity measures. For the union confederation leadership, participation in social partnerships has been a much higher priority than organizing the working class and promoting genuine solidarity.

Fighting Unions in Contemporary Lithuania

There are a few unions which have resisted the complacency of the social partnership. One new and small union, SAMPRO, mainly organizes workers in the new retail sector and has been successful in attracting new members, organizing pickets and boycotts, and putting pressure on bosses. The Lithuanian Education Workers’ Union, which also runs a national “center” with other independent unions, has also been active and fighting since the early 1990s. One reason why it has remained strong is that the wave of privatization in the 1990s did not threaten education and in an early congress of the organization, decisions were made to focus on reconstructing the union at the grassroots by reviving courage, solidarity, and workplace organizing. Of course, this union is not without its problems too.

In summary, contemporary Lithuania remains a bastion for the wealthy, with its low taxes on capital gains and property and its flat tax on income. Although the workers’ movement experienced a revival in the Perestroika-era Soviet Union, since independence was gained and neoliberal policies were implemented, unions have progressively lost strength. Social partnerships have benefited union bureaucracy, but not the rank and file. The broader population has been further emiserated by severe austerity measures, making workplace organizing challenging. However, some efforts at the grassroots provide a small glimmer of hope for the future.



The IWW formed the International Solidarity Commission to help the union build the worker-to-worker solidarity that can lead to effective action against the bosses of the world. To contact the ISC, email solidarity@iww.org.

The Human Cost Of Low Prices: Industrial Tragedy In Bangladesh

By Mathieu Dube

As the death toll reaches more than 1,000, the collapse of a garment factory in Bangladesh sheds light on the terrible conditions under which the textile industry workers are living. On April 24, the eight-story building known as Rana Plaza, located in the suburb of the capital Dhaka, collapsed onto thousands of workers. The building had shown signs of failure and cracks had been reported by workers who were threatened with pay cuts if they didn't go inside. This is the latest work-related accident in a long string of similar incidents in Bangladesh's \$20 billion-a-year garment industry. This industry supplies large retail companies from the Global North which are pressuring the factories to get the lowest prices possible at the expense of the workers. The local bosses profiting from this exploitation are able to ignore safety measures because of their close ties with the different levels of government in Bangladesh. Because of the relative size of garments production in total exports, the bosses exert a great influence on the local officials. For the last 10 years, the workers and also the population of Bangladesh in general have been protesting and organizing against the dehumanizing nature of the garment industry's exploitation of workers. This, along with international solidarity, is starting to chip away against the incredible oppression Bangladeshi workers suffer under.

Rana Plaza is one of the thousands of buildings that house textile factories around Dhaka. The typical building has shops on the first floor and stacks production units on the upper floors. The usual situation of a factory floor consists of overcrowded, hot rooms littered with supplies, where people are forced to work long shifts for little pay. The safety code is almost never respected, only part of each building will comply with regulations so that when inspectors show up they can pretend like there are some kind of measures taken to prevent workers' lives from being put in danger. In the same way, construction will ignore the very minimal laws of Bangladesh: Rana Plaza was originally a three-story building but was later expanded with five additional floors without a permit. The structure was never designed to hold the equipment necessary for the production taking place there but this was ignored in order to meet the demand. In the week preceding the collapse, workers noticed cracks forming in the walls and they refused to enter the building. The management threatened them with two-day pay cuts if they did not go in to work. A bank located on the lower floor of the building had evacuated its employees after the reports of the cracks. Given the complete contempt for workers safety in this industry, this is not the first accident to claim lives. In the last 10 years, there have been plenty of similar events. The one that is most well-known, before this one, is the Tazreen factory fire that

claimed 100 lives in 2012, but several more occurred: the Spectrum Sweaters factory collapse killed 64 in 2005, the Garib & Garib factory fire killed 21 in 2010. These are just the incidents in which workers perished—garment workers are injured, sometimes permanently, on a regular basis in Bangladesh.

Sadly, the level of danger from building structures is just one part of the deplorable conditions these factory workers are subjected to. The workers in this industry are 85 percent women. They typically earn about 150 takas (approximately \$2) for a 12-15 hour shift. Their chairs at work have no backrests and they are typically cramped up side-by-side in overheated shop floors they try to keep up with a completely inhumane work cadence. They get very few short breaks during their shift, if any at all. The tempo is so brutal that workers usually burn out after reaching the age of 35. The typical worker at one of the 5,000 factories around Dhaka is a young woman in her late teens.

The garment industry employs 2.5 million workers and it represents about 40 percent of the total manufacturing in Bangladesh. The industry grew rapidly since American and European retailers started to do business there in the 1980s. The demand for low costs by these retailers led them to move production to Bangladesh from other "emerging economies" such as China and India because of the greater exploitation of workers and of the absence of trade restrictions such as tariffs on exportation. The garment industry accounts for 76 percent of the total exports from Bangladesh. Companies such as Benetton, H&M, Gap, Walmart, Disney, J. C. Penney, and many others have been doing business with textile subcontractors in Bangladesh over the years. When reports emerge about accidents or disgusting conditions, companies will shift between the contractors and pretend like they are being a responsible corporate global citizen. The reality is that these companies are the ones insisting on the lowest cost possible, which leads the subcontractor to pay about 14 percent of what is considered a living wage. Their bottom line needs to take precedence over workers' well-being and, as the most recent fire at Rana Plaza painfully demonstrates, even over the workers' lives.

As is to be expected, both the general population of Bangladesh and the factory workers have staged spontaneous and organized demonstrations. When tragedies occur, especially in light of how the building conditions were known to all, the workers and their families usually put on spontaneous demonstrations. In this case, some factories resembling the Rana Plaza were set on fire by people living and working around the factory. Although these bursts of indignation are understandable, they rarely lead to better conditions for the workers. More organized forms of worker solidarity have been attempted with varying degrees of success over the years. The



The remains of a couple embracing in the ashes of Rana Plaza. Photo: Taslima Akhter

legal system and the collusion between factory owners and the different levels of government seriously hamper any attempt to organize the workers. A Freedom House report from 2007 states that "union formation is hampered by a 30 percent employee approval requirement and restrictions on organizing by unregistered unions. Employers can legally fire or transfer workers suspected of union activities." In 2012, union activist Aminul Islam was found dead by a roadside in Ghatail, Bangladesh, 61 miles north of Dhaka. His body showed evidence of torture. Islam was tortured during his arrest in 2010, so even though no proof exists that his murder was related to his union activities, all signs point towards it. Despite all these difficulties, a successful campaign to raise the minimum wage was conducted in 2010. The trade union leadership, being pushed by mass action, demanded 10,000 takas (\$128) as the monthly minimum wage but eventually caved and got 3,000 takas (\$38) from the government. One needs to keep in mind that the living wage in Bangladesh is anywhere between 18,000-21,000 takas (\$230-269) a month, according to the Center for American Progress and the Worker Rights Consortium. There are 68 trade union federations in the industry, most of whom avoid shop-floor organizing which prevents the movement from growing when spontaneous strikes occur. Factory-level, grassroots organizing is developing though and the rest of the population is

beginning to support the workers. After the Tazreen fire, Jahangirnagar University and Dhaka University professors and students came to demonstrate with the workers. A group of anthropologists from Jahangirnagar led an investigation into the cause of the fire. Hopefully, this latest tragedy will also create more solidarity between workers and the population of Bangladesh as well as more factory-floor level organizing.

Ultimately, the real responsibility for this tragedy rests on the multinational corporations located in Global North countries which are always demanding lower costs for the goods they sell. The typical piece of garment reaches the United States at the cost of \$5 and sells for \$35. The \$5 cost includes the shipment, the packaging and the raw material; consequently what goes to the worker who produces the garment is very low. The profit rate and thus the exploitation rate is obscene. Pressure needs to be put on these corporations so that they ease their ever-growing demands on the factories in Bangladesh and force the government there to let the workers organize as well as enforce safety regulations so that no such tragedy ever happens again.

With files from the Huffington Post, the Associated Press, the Daily Star, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, Socialist Worker, *Counterpunch*, *CBC News Human Rights Watch*, *Freedom House*, *War on Want* and *Nadir*.

IWW Fundraising For Bangladesh

By Greg Giorgio

In the aftermath of last November's Tazreen factory fire and the death of over 1,000 garment workers, IWW members contacted the National Garment Workers Federation (NGWF) General Secretary Amirul Haque Amin to ask how we might best assist his organization. Following another needless tragedy that claimed some of the members of his union, Amin spoke very matter-of-factly, saying "Money would be the most help."

With the help of FWs Kenneth Miller, Tom Keough, Jacob Brent, Jonathan Christianson and others, I volunteered to collect the money and send it to the NGWF. Over several months, IWW branches in Boston, New York City and other areas conducted fundraisers and urged members to donate. Some received the old NGWF sweat-free baseball assessment stamp (still a few available) as a souvenir of their effort. As a delegate who helped develop it a number of years ago, I couldn't promise the stamp could be supplied to all who donated, because there were only a couple of dozen left in my rigging. We sent nearly \$500. We



Rana Plaza. Photo: indybay.org

Yet another death trap factory killed hundreds in Bangladesh's garment district in the Dhaka free trade zone as we go to press. The netherworld of neoliberal, anti-union sweatshops is still largely hidden behind the gore of today's headlines. FW Miller was fond of saying that we "need to build a bridge" of solidarity from the sweatshop floor to the places where we might also organize workers here and around the world. The NGWF's Amin is fond of saying that his union stands ready to support our IWW causes, too.

To find out how you can donate to the workers in Bangladesh, email solidarity@iww.org.

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GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

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